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ABSTRACT

Goals for the elementary school and guidelines for school work are summarized in this brief overview of Lgr 80, a new curriculum for the first 9 years of compulsory education in Sweden. Policy statements on "equivalent" education for all elementary school children, curriculum content, and the role of the school as a socializing agent are presented. In addition, guidelines are provided for selecting subject matter, planning instruction, assigning homework, issuing report cards, and modifying instruction for pupils with difficulties. Guides are also provided for planning at the local level; establishing pupil-developed subjects, activities, and optional courses; providing all students the same opportunity to advance to secondary schooling; and breaking traditional sex role patterns in the curriculum. (RH)

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A SUMMARY OF GOALS AND GUIDELINES IN LGR 80, THE NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

A SUMMARY OF GOALS AND GUIDELINES IN LGR 80, THE NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

On February 14, 1980, the Swedish Government promulgated the "Goals and Guidelines for Work in the Primary School"[1], which enter into the new curriculum familiarly referred to by its Swedish initials, Lgr 80. "Goals and Guidelines" are based on two parliamentary decisions: the one on the internal working of the school (SIA), taken in 1976, the other on a new curriculum for the primary school, taken in 1979.

The curriculum consists of:

1. Goals and Guidelines - promulgated on February 14, 1980
2. Time schedule - laid down in curriculum decision, spring 1979
3. Stipulations for time schedule - October 16, 1980
4. Syllabuses - October 16, 1980
5. Explanatory material - to come continuously

The goals and guidelines contained in Lgr 80 will mainly come into force in the 1980/81 academic year. However, the implementation of time schedules and syllabuses will be deferred until the 1982/83 academic year.

The general part of the curriculum is much more concise than in earlier curricula, this because the general directives have been abolished. This forms an integral part of the quest to give the local school greater freedom and responsibility.

"Goals and Guidelines" states the following goals for the school

- equivalent education
- good knowledge and skills
- upbringing and development

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[1] In Sweden primary education is equivalent to 9 years of compulsory education, given in basic school. A person usually finishes secondary education at the age of 19.

"Goals and Guidelines" gives concrete guidelines for the following:

- the school's cooperation with preschools, homes, associations, cultural life and working life
- design of the school day
- selection of subject matter
- free choice of studies (electives, themes, free activities)
- educational and vocational guidance
- work systems and modes
- help to pupils with special needs
- planning and evaluation

GOALS FOR THE SCHOOL

Equivalent education

No matter what their sex, place of residence, social background and financial circumstances, all children shall have access to education in the primary school. Children are different when they come to the school. The school should not strive to make them alike. On the other hand, the school has an obligation to take good care of all pupils and to support and encourage everyone to develop his or her ability and interests. The school has a special responsibility for pupils with difficulties and for children and young persons who belong to various minorities.

Knowledge - skills

The school shall guide the pupils' search for knowledge into essential areas and during their nine years of attendance gradually broaden their horizons and deepen their knowledge. The pupils shall be given insight into central concepts and relationships that can lay the groundwork for their cognitive development. No education is to be given within the primary school which aims at specialized vocations. The fields of knowledge to be treated shall be of fundamental importance for one and all irrespective of coming activity.

The acquisition of knowledge is an active and creative process. This denotes sedulous pursuit of a task which aims at a fixed goal.

It is central to school work for the pupils to take systematic training in the basic communications skills: speaking, reading,

writing and arithmetic. It is important to get these skills firmly established as early as possible. Training must not be unilaterally concentrated on the subjects of Swedish and mathematics.

Similarly, the school shall stress the technical-practical everyday skills. Bringing everyday knowledge into different subjects makes it possible to give children respect for being economical with resources and useful objects and for the possibilities of re-using everyday things. Moreover the school, proceeding from the children's everyday experiences, must give the pupils insight into the enormous survival problems which the world faces.

Upbringing

The school shall nurture the young. This means that the school shall actively and wilfully influence and encourage children and young people to embrace the fundamental values of our democracy and to let these find expression in practical action. Among other things, this means that the school shall instill the insight that nobody must be laid open to oppression and that no one with problems and difficulties must be left to his fate.

The chief responsibility for bringing up children always rests with the home. However, the school shall support the parents in their upbringing task. It is of great importance that parents, too, accept and seek to promote democratic principles and systems of rules. In that way children and young people get to feel that home and school are parts of the same surrounding world.

Adults should strive to bring up children with minimum coercion. Man's ethical evolution is never furthered by blind obedience, but the indifference of adults is no help, either. A child's morality is shaped through contact and community with people on whom the child relies and whom it wants to emulate.

With the basic values as their starting point, every class and every school must devise those rules which children, school staff and parents together agree are necessary if working and being together in class and in school are going to function. They must also decide together which consequences different violations of the rules are going to have.

The school shall be open to the expression of divergent value judgments and opinions, and shall uphold the importance of personal

involvement. At the same time the school shall assert the essential values of our democracy and take clear exception to everything that conflicts with these values.

GUIDELINES FOR THE SCHOOLWORK

"Goals and Guidelines" lays down that all activity in the school shall be imbued with the school's goals and have a pedagogical aim. This observation also holds for the free activities. It is further emphasized that operational planning should be as decentralized as possible.

Selection of subject matter

Where the selection of subject matter is concerned, this should be guided by the joint planning in the classroom. Such planning is of great importance in motivating the pupils.

The selection and treatment of subject matter in all subjects shall be marked by objectivity and manysidedness. As here used, the term "objectivity" signifies that the teacher is called upon to avoid biassed presentation. The meaning of ambiguous and vague concepts shall be clarified. As here used, the term "manysidedness" is understood to mean that the selection of subject matter shall be such as to bring out problems central to the subject.

Value judgments are permitted, but those who stand for them must be clearly identified. Thus the teacher is entitled to express value judgments if it clearly emerges that they are personal. Representatives of different associations and congregations may take part in school activities. In that case, the requirement of objectivity and manysidedness is applicable to the total output for which local education authorities and head teachers are responsible.

Modes of working

The starting point for working with different subject fields should be the picture of reality held by the pupils. For this reason the work should start with something topical or near-at-hand. Indeed, the classroom instruction shall be tied as closely as possible to the pupils' daily rounds. Thus it is important to take up problems that the pupils themselves have encountered. The alternation of

observations with theory and practice can often be the most valuable mode of working.

The requirement that pupils work actively rules out a one-sided lecturing routine but also passive copying exercises in which the pupils use pre-produced stencils. No teacher should restrict his or her work to the organization of learning opportunities to the exclusion of everything else. Conversations and interplay between teachers and pupils are important instead.

The Education Act says that class councils are mandatory. "Goals and Guidelines" emphasize pupil participation in designing the school's environment; for instance, the pupils can help out in the school library, wait at table in the lunchroom, do cleaning, lead groups in the performance of free activities, make arrangements as part of the Adopted Town Movement, and publish a school newspaper.

Homework

In the matter of school assignments to be done outside regular school hours (homework), Lgr 80 says that these constitute a part of the school's mode of working. A way of teaching the pupils to assume responsibility for a task. If the pupils cannot complete the assignment at home, it should be natural for the school to help the pupils execute the task in the school. A homework assignment can imply that the pupil collects data about the surrounding community and about nature, e.g. through interviews. Homework should also be used to do the kind of practice and drill that is necessary to entrench knowledge and skills.

Report cards

Beginning with the 1982/83 academic year, report cards are to be issued only in the eighth and ninth grades. However, the school is required, starting with the first grade, to contact the parents of all children at least twice a year.

Pupils with difficulties

A separate section of "Goals and Guidelines" is devoted to pupils with special needs. It says there that if the pupils have troubles with their schoolwork, it is first necessary to try out whether the school can change its mode of working. The need for variation is

emphasized. On the other hand, the school may not isolate schoolwork from social life by letting all activity become freely selected work. If so, the experiences that pupils later gain of the real world will be traumatic. Gaps in basic knowledge will readily tend to make the pupils powerless for the rest of their lives.

The development and design of the school day must receive special attention in schools with many problems. If the starting differences from one school to another are great, the differences in resource commitments are bound to be substantial, too. Some of the resources are therefore free for decisions taken at the local level.

Local plan of work

The SIA reform and the new primary school curriculum will substantially decentralize the school, which means that greatly intensified demands will be put on the assumption of responsibility at the local level. Here Lgr 80 says that planning for a headmaster area shall be documented in a plan of work. The plan shall express the goals and aspirations of the local school; in that way the plan is to serve as a development programme and as a form of local curriculum work.

Free choice of studies

To increase the freedom of choice at senior level and to give pupils a greater opportunity to pursue the subjects and activities which particularly interest them, about one-third of the time at senior level will be devoted to studies of pupils' own choice. This will mean that, to a greater extent than hitherto, school activities can be decided locally.

The free choice of studies will comprise:

- Optional courses. In addition to the course common to all in the compulsory subjects the pupils shall choose their own optional subjects. The same time shall be devoted to the set of optional subjects as in the present curriculum (from 1969), i.e. altogether 11 periods a week at senior level.
- Free activities. These shall fall outside the timetable and be a bridge between schoolwork and the pupils' leisure interests. The forms of activity shall be decided locally. The objective for the scope of free activities is given altogether 6 periods a week in grades 7, 8 and 9.

- In-depth studies. Teachers and pupils shall themselves be able to choose in-depth studies within the scope of the compulsory subjects. It is suggested that about 12 periods a week should be devoted to these studies.

There should be scope for a freer choice of studies at intermediate level as well. There should be provision for in-depth studies, and altogether three periods a week should be set aside for free activities.

Optional subjects

Instead of the present arrangement with four alternative optional subjects decided centrally, it has been suggested that optional subject courses and their content should mainly be decided locally.

The optional subject courses should be of varying length and lead to intensified or specialized knowledge in parts of two or more subjects in an aesthetic-practical, sociological, scientific-technological or linguistic sector. They must not have the form of parallel or supplementary courses to compulsory subjects, nor such that they may be expected to have a skew sex distribution.

Every school shall be bound to offer three-year optional courses in a B language - French or German - if at least five pupils so desire. Shorter optional courses in a B language may also occur.

Immigrant pupils shall have the choice of Native Language as optional subject. This implies a reinforcement of native language teaching in primary school.

Increased resources are proposed to permit a larger number of alternative opitional subjects than today.

Relation between primary and secondary school

The condition for the free choice of studies is that the relation between primary and secondary school is changed. All primary school pupils shall have the same chances of going on to secondary school regardless of the courses and combinations of courses they choose at senior level.

Such a change will enable primary school pupils to choose that which interests them most without being influenced by qualification or other requirements.

The main change as far as secondary school is concerned is the languages programme in the three- and four-year lines. This must be reviewed. In these lines - except the classical line - there shall normally be two languages - English and a B or C language. Pupils can thus be given a profounder knowledge of languages. In three- and four-year lines, however, they shall be able to choose a third language.

An advanced course of English and/or mathematics will no longer be required as condition for admission to the three- and four-year lines. It will therefore be necessary to supplement the content of these subjects in the general course at primary school. The syllabuses for these subjects in grade 1 in the three- and four-year lines of upper secondary school must also be revised.

School for equality

Various proposals in the curriculum seek to break the traditional sex role pattern and to attain greater equality between boys and girls at school.

- Home management is to be introduced at junior level for at least one period a week.
- Technology will be a compulsory subject at senior level, with two periods a week. In order to capture the technical interests of pupils at an early stage, elements of technology will be included in orientational subjects at the junior and middle levels.
- Typing will be a compulsory element in the teaching. All pupils shall have had 30 periods' teaching of typing before they leave primary school. It will be given first of all at middle level.
- Paedology will be an independent, compulsory subject at senior level, with one period a week.
- Co-gymnastics will be the accepted principle for gymnastics teaching.

- The optional courses at senior level shall not have such a form that they may be expected to lead to a division of the pupils according to sex.

New working method

	All levels		
	Junior	Middle	Senior
Paedology	-	-	1+
Pictorial art	-	6	5
English	2	10	9
Home management	-	1+	4-
Athletics	6	9	9
Mathematics	13	15	12
Music	4	5	2-
General subjects	18	21	32
Sociological orientation	-	(15)-	(17)
Scientific orientation	-	(6)	(15)+
Handicrafts	2	9	5
Swedish	29	26	10
Elective	-	-	11
Free activities		2+	5-

" including Pictorial art, Handicrafts and Home management